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September Precipitation

Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour ... *a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

September Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term September average:

Great Lakes Basin	142%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	249%
Lake Superior	105%
Lakes	126%

LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

Volume 4, Number 10 **October 7, 1996**

Hurricane Fran Passes Over Lower Lakes

Decline of Lake Levels Slowed by Wet Weather

The seasonal decline in lake levels was slowed considerably in September, primarily by the effects of heavy rainfall. The onset of wet conditions began with the passage of Hurricane Fran over lower portions of the basin during the first week of September. Rainfall occurred frequently over most of the basin during the rest of the month, the exception being the Lake Superior basin.

As a result of the rainfall, daily levels on all of the lakes had declined by 4 centimetres or less from the beginning of September to the end of the month. Lakes St. Clair and Huron were actually slightly higher at the end of the month than at the start. At the beginning of October, lake levels were above average, by 30 cm on Lake Huron, 45 cm on Lakes St. Clair and Erie, and 12 cm on Lake Ontario.

Lake Superior Outflow Increases Following Repair Completion

Completion of repairs on September 20 at the Compensating Works in the St. Marys River enabled all gates at the dam to be opened, in order to increase the Lake Superior outflow.

Since May, repairs to the dam have restricted Lake Superior outflows to amounts less than those specified by the regulation plan. As a result, about 5 cm of extra water was retained on Lake Superior by the end of August.

Having all 16 gates open for the last ten days of the month, and maximum possible flows through the three near-by hydropower plants (which bypass the dam), brought the Lake Superior outflow to that specified by the regulation plan for the month of September. Outflows in October and November are expected to be very high and significantly above that specified by the regulation plan.

The high Lake Superior level conditions this summer have led to numerous concerns expressed by property owners, for example in Thunder Bay, Ontario and in the Whitefish Bay area in Michigan.

At the beginning of October, Lake Superior's level remained about 20 cm higher than average for this time of year. It appears that the level has reached

Michigan-Huron

Lake Ontario 191%

* Record High

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

this year's peak and has begun it's seasonal decline. To eliminate the water previously retained on Lake Superior as soon as possible, the International Lake Superior Board of Control will keep all 16 gates open at the dam until mid-November.

Rainfall Extremes on Erie Basin

What a difference a month makes! During August, rainfall over the Lake Erie drainage basin was a record low, according to preliminary data, with less than 3 cm falling during the entire month. The first five days of September were also dry, but then Hurricane Fran arrived. Since then about 20 cm of rain has fallen over the basin, a record high. London received over 30 cm, or one foot.

Great Lakes Atlas Available

As mentioned several months ago, the third edition of the Great Lakes Environmental Atlas and Resource Book is available for purchase. This 46 page colour atlas contains a wealth of information on the Great Lakes, their environment, and human activities within their basin.

The Atlas is available in English and French, for $19.95 per copy plus GST and shipping and handling. If you wish to obtain a copy, please send a cheque or money order payable to "The Receiver General for Canada" for $25.09 to our Burlington location listed in the "For More Information" box.

Compensating Works Trivia

As mentioned in an article above, all 16 gates in the St. Marys River compensating works are fully open, allowing water to flow through them. The last time all the gates were open was November 1982. At that time, Great Lakes Power Company's hydroelectric plant on the St. Marys River was under reconstruction and no water was flowing through it, so it was necessary to have all the gates open in order to achieve the required discharge from Lake Superior.

Water Held on Ontario to be Discharged

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control has decided to remove the 2 cm of water retained on Lake Ontario, which resulted from Lake Ontario outflows being less than regulation plan earlier this year. Over the next several weeks, the flows will be more than the amount specified by the regulation plan to eliminate the water retained on the lake.

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